

November 2016

Issue 14

THE SPECTRUM SHOW

Magazine

VIDI-ZX

VIDEO DIGITISER

REPLAY EXPO

REPORT FROM THE RECENT SHOW

FLASHBACK 86

GAME REVIEWS

HARDWARE

SPECIAL FEATURES



Includes material
not in the video
show!

THE GRUMPY OGRE

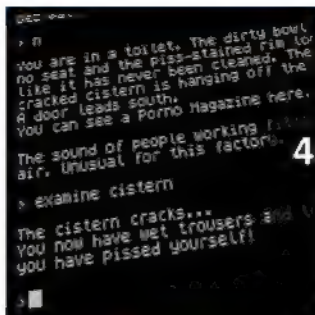
More grumpy adventuring
from the ogre himself.



CONTENTS

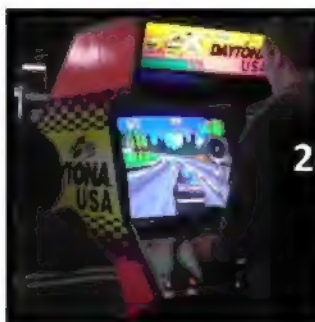


16. VIDI-ZX
Video capturing on the Spectrum



40. BASIC ADVENTURES

A new compilation of my early games.



28. Replay Expo

Show report and a look at the Spectrum Next.

FEATURES

4 News from 1986.

Find out what was happening back in 1986.

8 Painting By Numbers

Review of Paintbox from Print and Plotter.

16 Vidi-ZX

Video capture for you Spectrum.

28 Replay Report

Report from the recent Manchester show.

36 Grumpy Ogre

More ramblings about adventure games.

38 Super Toolkit

A set of tools for BASIC programmers.

12 X=Y=Z

Fiendish puzzler from Bob's Stuff.

13 Mooncresta

Arcade shooter from Incentive.

14 Street Gang Football

Footy on the street from Codemasters.

18 Stormfinch

Classic shooter from Stonechat Productions.

19 Gobbleman

Early Pacman clone from Atric Computing.

20 Mr Wimpy

Burger flipping madness from Ocean.

22 Sam Mallard

An excellent new menu-driven adventure.

24 The Pyramid

Shooty pyramid arcade game from Fantasy Software.

25 Accelerator

Interesting shooter from Century Software.

34 Alien Destroyer

Galaxian clone that may be familiar.

REVIEWS

6 Dynamite Dan

Classic platformer from Mirrorsoft.



Welcome to issue 14 and thank you for taking the time to download and read it.

Anyone following me either via Twitter or my website, will know about my new adventure game compilation, planned for release before December this year. If you have not heard about them, check out page 40 for full details, and also visit my website where you can keep up to date with progress.

Talking of my games, I am so excited to have two released on real media thanks to Cronosoft. Deep Core Raider and Toofy In Fan Land both have had updates and can now be bought on cassette. They look really fantastic, and it's brilliant to finally get my games on the shelf.



Micro Mart were not as excited though, giving both below average scores, but each to their own.

Another exciting event was of course Replay Expo as it turned up in Manchester again.

I spent many an hour playing the multitude of arcade games on free-play, along with lines of pinball machines, consoles and gaming micros.

I met up with Geoff Neil and Jim Bagley, and had a good chat about retro gaming, the Speccy, the ZX Uno and the Spectrum Next. Jim very kindly gave us a demo of the Uno and his Spectrum Next dev kit. Details can be found on page 28 and also episode 56 of the show.

I managed to buy a few old magazines too, have a stupidly expensive burger and generally had a good time.

I will be there next year again, and hopefully they will provide more Spectrums to play on.

From the good things, to the not so good.

Anyone in the scene, or that frequents Twitter, Facebook or various forums will have noticed the ongoing debate about the Vega+.

There are many accusations from both camps, with the launch date of 20th October being missed, and subsequent dates also slipping. I was really hoping to have mine so I could review it in the next episode, and even held the feature spot open until the very last minute.

The launch party went ahead, with a few people getting their hands on what was described as 'advanced production' models, so as I type, things look to be moving, if a little late. More images and video have also been released, so I am hoping Santa will be kind this year.

As a result of all the in-fighting, Nick Humphries pulled the Your Sinclair Rock n Roll website, which is a huge pity, and a massive loss to the scene. I am sad to see it go as I helped Nick many moons ago, when things were much more settled.

Any site closing down is a loss to the scene, that, to be honest, does need all the enthusiasm it can get.

Moving on...

This issue will not have a type-in game as hoped. It would seem nobody is interested to even comment about it, so out it goes. I was hoping a few people would send it their crap games for a bit of fun, but there are many more important things in life without having to worry about that.

Enjoy.

PROGRAMMERS WANTED

As software houses start looking to Christmas, this is the time of year they pick up programmers and start on their festive hits. However this year there seems to be a lack of talent around, and the ones that are to be found are expecting far too much money.

Mikro-gen claim some of their candidates are asking for £28,000 when in reality, the average for a programmer would be £14,000. Other companies also having trouble include Palace Software, who offer £10,00 as a base salary but applicants wanting much more.



BEYOND STAR TREK



Beyond software are to release the first official Star Trek game across multiple platforms later this year.

The software company has licenced the title and the team responsible for the game will be headed up by Mike Singleton – the author of Lords of Midnight.

The game is said to be an arcade / strategy game with speech, and will be available on the Spectrum, Commodore, Amstrad and Atari ST.

The company are already boasting the game will be the most significant step in the evolution of the computer game.

COMPUTER BOWIE

David Bowie's movie, Labyrinth, is to be converted into a computer game by Activision. There is little detail at the moment, but the game is hoped to be complete by December, just in time for the festive season.

WAFAT HIN

Clive Sinclair's company, Anamartic, setup to develop wafat scale technology, claim they are in the final prototype phase, and require backing of around £6m to be able to continue and produce commercially ready goods.



The technology is aimed directly between hard disk storage and semiconductor storage, and has been one of Clive's projects for a long time. Clive himself is keeping a low profile, being a non-executive director, but will no doubt be providing a wealth of information and experience.

TRIVIAL DOMARK

Learning its lesson, Domark have purchased the rights to create a game based on the popular board game, Trivial Pursuits.

The software house got into hot water last month when it was forced to change the name of its latest game after the makers of Spitting Image threw their weight around.

The game is to be launched in September across multiple platforms including the Spectrum.

CLASSIC ADVERTS - QUICKSILVA

Looking back at the classic, and not so classic adverts from the Spectrum's past.



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DYNAMITE

Mirrorsoft 1985



Dynamite Dan was for me, a standout game when it was released in 1985.

Platform games, since Manic Miner, had been flooding the market and most of them were utter dross, however, when this came along it changed my opinion of platformers, at least initially.

The idea is you have to collect 8 sticks of dynamite so you can blow the safe and get your hands on the plans for a secret weapon.

This is made difficult by masses of enemies, and this is my problem with the game – there are too many!

Making progress, even on the first few screens, is difficult. Every screen is packed with things you have to jump over, avoid and dodge, and the majority of the time you don't.

This loses energy and eventually lives if you don't find something to replenish it. Your energy can be seen bottom left, and this decreases every time you hit something - and you always do.

As you move around the game map, there are





some brilliant bits of scenery and some marvellous sprites, all well drawn and animated. Transporters flash, objects flicker and colour is used really well.

There is a lift to take you through the different areas, if you can manage to find it without dying.

Scattered about are other items that replenish your health, give you another life or help in one way or another.

At the bottom of the map there is water, which is deadly, but you can survive if you are carrying some oxygen tanks. Other things to keep you on your toes are the

bouncy platforms and electric zappers, these make timing your jump even more tricky. There are so many little touches and features that make this stand out, it's just a pity it is difficult to get anywhere.

Sound wise the game is great, with some nice effects and tunes for collecting different items as well as the variety of active scenery.

Collision is very strict which makes the game tough, and for me, an average gamer, just that bit too difficult. I found it hard to get anywhere and this spoiled what is otherwise a great game.

Playing with unlimited lives makes it better and doesn't really make the game too easy, because you still have to make the jumps and avoid the water. Not to mention navigating the map.

Overall then, a great game if you are good at platformers.



A collection of paintbrushes with various colored bristles (red, green, yellow, brown) and a black palette with three wells of paint (pink, teal, and white) are arranged on a light-colored wooden surface. The brushes are fanned out, and the palette is in the lower-left corner.

PAINTING BY NUMBERS

PAINTBOX PUT THROUGH ITS PACES

The Spectrum is many things to many people.

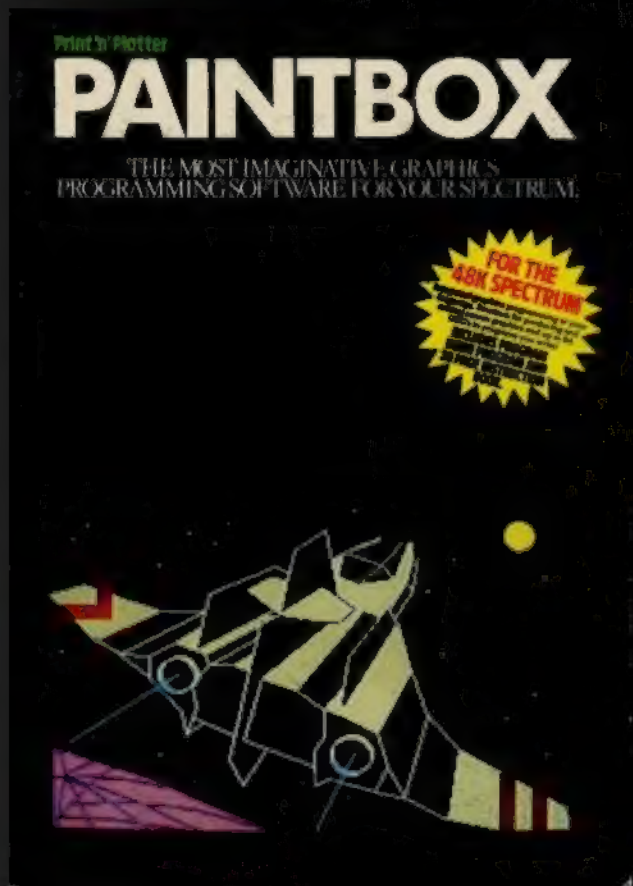
Games machine, music maker, word processor and teacher.

Even with limited capabilities, there are some impressive graphics programs available for it.

There have been many paint programs for the Spectrum, but my package of choice in the 80's was Paint Box from Print and Plotter.

It was released in 1983 and came with some very useful additions inside the attractive, large box.

The main menu has three options and we'll go through each of them.



UDG Editor

Many packages had user definable graphics editors, and you could even make your own or type one out from a magazine, but Print and Plotter's offering had a little surprise. Not only can you edit the standard 21 UDGs but also three other banks, giving you 84 in total.

You can view the ones supplied, which include a variety of things such as planes or submarines, edit them or start your own. You have the ability to switch to one of



the other three banks, and save them all out to store your masterpieces.

The editor is simple enough to use giving you the usual move and paint functions across the eight by eight pixel enlarged grid. You can also rotate, invert or mirror the current one before saving it to any of the 21 slots. This is quite a neat inclusion and I put this to use many times.



Once saved out as the full 84 images, you can load and use them in your own BASIC programs. To do this you simply called each bank using a USR statements. You could mix and match as you liked, so for example, you could call up bank 1 and add AB and C to the screen, then call bank 2 and add AB and C again.

PAINTBOX

You can try out all of the UDGs before saving though using the Sketch Pad.

Sketch Pad



This is a useful feature, as you can see how all your UDGs fit together. If you are creating larger images built up from multiple blocks, then this feature is great. You are limited to a small area of screen, but that doesn't really matter, you are also limited to just one colour.

This is a test area only, not a creative tool. If you want to use them in a full screen creation, then you need to select the Precision Plotter.

Precision Plotter



The Precision Plotter is a run-of-the-mill, standard line drawing tools. There are options for straight lines, curves, circles and fills, the usual things you find in even the basic of tools.

It does lack any kind of pattern fill, which is a shame, but the controls are easy, and once you get to know the keys to switch modes, you can create pictures quite quickly.

You have the functionality to store the screen in memory. This is useful if you make a mistake and want to recall the in-memory version so you can continue from a better saved screen.

It's not perfect though, there are several omission that can be found in competing products like Melbourne Draw for example.

There is no magnify option to let you work on smaller details or just parts of the screen. If you want to work on tiny areas, you have to struggle with full screen. There is also no fast move option. If you are moving the cursor all the way across the screen, it can take 15 seconds, which is a bit of pain really.



Screen Planner

The last option is the Screen Planner. This is a mix of the other two functions, allowing you to add UDGs to your image stored in memory. A good idea that makes things like repeating borders easy to do.

On the B side of the cassette is a demo program showing some character based animations using various UDGs along

with some very nice images, created using the package.

I suspect this should have been running on the shop computers to entice people to buy Paintbox, and from the demo, it does look impressive.



PAINTBOX

GRAPH

TOOLK

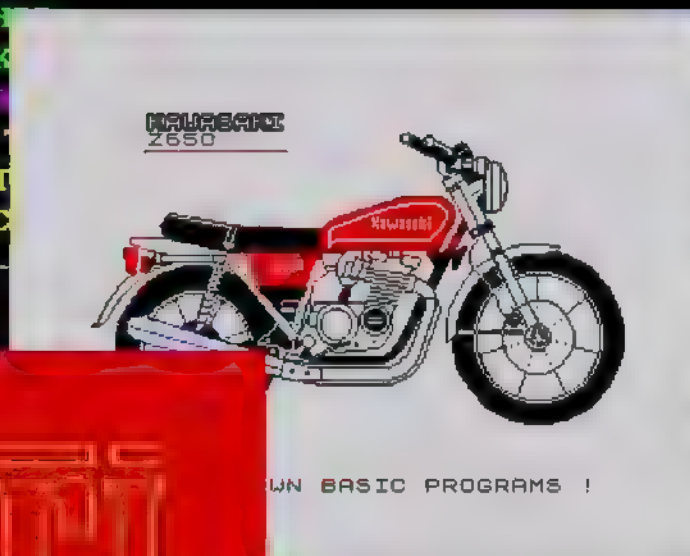
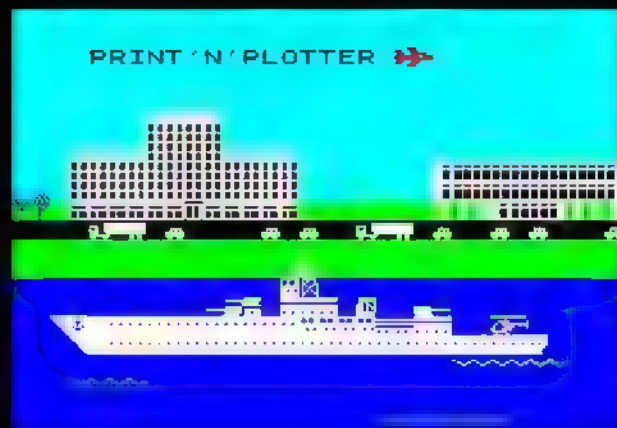
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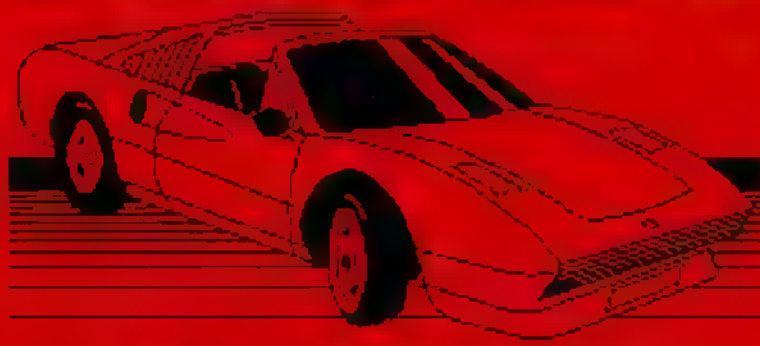
PLOTT

PRODUCE

THAT YOU NEVER DREAMED POSSIBLE



Overall then, a good package with some nice features, but it could have been better with a few small additions.



UP TO USE FROM BRIGHTON (1991)

X=Z=Y

Bob's Stuff 2014

02 KINKY



X=Y=Z is a somewhat unique game that really challenges your brain, and that is something not often found in Spectrum games.

The idea is simple, guide a square block around different pathways using a variety of limited controls. In a way, it plays quite like lemmings but without the rushed feel.

There are different controls to set along a pathway, for example slide, roll or turn, and when your block hits them, it does the desired move.

You are presented with a 3D pathway, a start point and an end point, and now it's down to you to work out how to complete it using only the blocks you have at your disposal.

Your block will, when you decide to start, head in one direction. If it encounters anything you have placed on the path, it will react accordingly, if you have put the right one down of course.

The blocks you have to do this are limited for each level, giving you just enough to complete it, so you

have to work out which to use at which point. Each of the block types are selected using a series of icons at the bottom of the screen and you can undo these if you make a mistake.

Once you are confident you can set the block on its path on one of the 334 levels, each one getting that little bit harder.

The graphics really suite the game and are clean and crisp, and the 3D effect works really well.

Sound too suites this game, and there are a few nice tunes scattered about to brighten things up.

This is a great game if you like puzzlers... and will quickly eat up time before you even know it.

Give this one a try.

0006
0873

05 CHECKMATE



0006 5E01



Incentive Software 1985

One of the all time great old school vertical shooter has to be Mooncresta from Nichibutsu. This 1980 arcade game had all the required elements to make a classic game; scrolling starfield, multi-section spaceship, numerous colourful aliens, mothership docking, and some great sound effects.

When the game was announced for the Spectrum in 1985 I found my local computer shop to get it so I could re-create those days in the arcade when I was crap at playing games, and sure enough when I got it I was still crap at it.

On to the spectrum version then, and we get a damn fine interpretation of the game. All the elements are there.

There are two levels of aliens that look like eyes but split up when hit followed by two levels of Galaxian type aliens.

Then it's on to the docking. Here you use your thrust and direction keys to safely dock with the next level of your ship. If successful you will get added firepower.

Next there are two levels of large dart type aliens followed by a load of

asteroids that shoot across the screen diagonally.

Then onto fast moving balls that morph into darts. Complete them and the game begins again but with tougher aliens.

The graphics are clear and look like the arcade counterpart and they are smooth and react well to control.

Sound is top notch getting very close to the arcade machine again, and gameplay is great, being a little more forgiving than the arcade making for a very playable experience.

No longer did I have to play the dirty arcade machine in a café half way up the A1. I could now enjoy it in my own home. I spent ages playing this game and kept going back for more.

This then, is not only a classic shooter in the arcade, but also on the Spectrum.

Brilliant.

1ST 000150 HI025000 2ND 000000
MOONCRESTA

1ST 000830 HI025000 2ND 000000
MOONCRESTA

1ST 004080 HI025000 2ND 000000
MOONCRESTA

STREET-GANG FOOTBALL

Codemasters 1989

I never liked or enjoyed football games, for any computer or console, or in fact football in real life, that is why they have never featured on the show, but I guess to be balanced I better include one, so why not this one:

You can play in two player simultaneous mode or against the computer, in what is described as a street wise football simulator. I don't recall any games of footy in my street involving knives though!

The game takes place, as the title suggests, in a street, and that includes cars, buildings and the usual street stuff. This means the pitch is somewhat unconventional, but then so is the game, as rules don't apply, and you are free to beat up the other team, as they are to batter you. The background graphics are good, and as you would expect, get in the way of play. This means you have to try and avoid cars, lampposts and manholes.

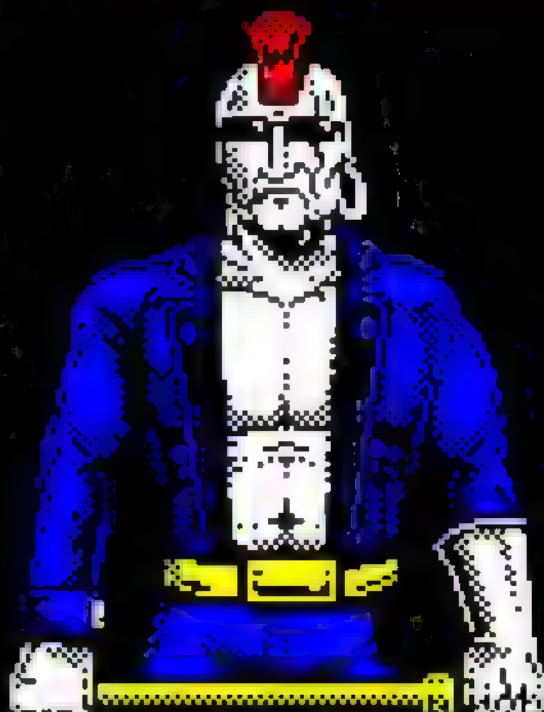
Code masters have tried to mix street football with a beat em up... and I'm not sure it worked, there is no actual fighting that I could make out.

After choosing your preferred control, it's onto the game. The view is

from above and slightly forward, which looks good, and all the graphics, including the players are well drawn.

The screen scrolls in all directions and the game plays as we have all come to expect from football games.

The player you control is highlighted with a number above him, and you have free movement, so if you want you can just hang



about at the back and watch the other players running about.

You can switch to another player, a player closer to the ball by pressing the kick button, or if you use a joystick, the fire button.

Once you have the ball you can run with it or kick it in the direction you are running. Holding down the kick key will mean a longer kick.

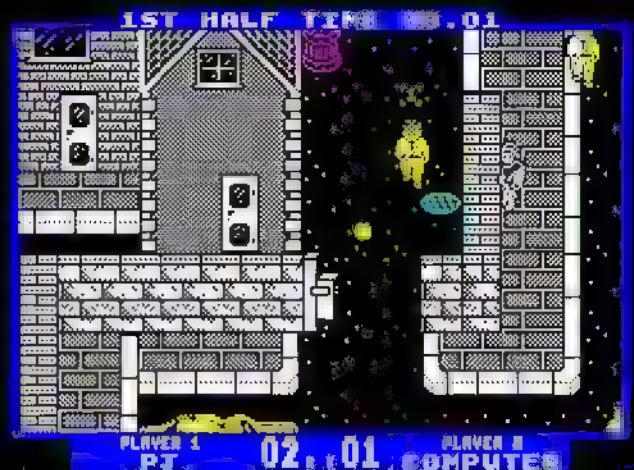
Scoring is very tricky, probably because I hardly play football games, and after ten or so games, I never managed to score a goal.

And talking of goals, when the other team get close to your goal the control is switched to the goal keeper which is fair enough, but if the ball is outside of the goal area, you are left waiting for the other team to collect it and score. You can't move any of your other players.

Because it's in the street and there are no rules, there are no throw ins, free kicks or penalties, just a continuous run and shoot game, which keeps the pace going. The game has various options including difficulty and length of game too.

By the end of my playing time I had got a little more accustomed to the controls, and actually did manage to score a goal, but the game ended 3-1.

Not a bad game then once you get used to it, but not being a football game fan I doubt I will be playing it again.





Vidi-ZX

Video Capturing Fun For Your Spectrum

With Mat Dolphin

If you owned a computer in the 1980s, then you might just remember the excitement of seeing digitised graphics in games. As software houses strove to make their games more exciting, even the loading pictures occasionally featured images which had been scanned and then transferred into the memory of the humble Speccy.

Often these were seen as a way of creating the wow factor and despite the low resolution, some memorable results were achieved. Games such as Amourite used digitised images to enhance the experience, providing extra value for 128k owners, hungry for a reason to impress their 48K friends.

The infamous Samantha Fox Strip Poker too had a different approach, marketing the entire game on the strength of the now very primitive digitised images. The software house Beyond also used it as a marketing technique, sadly though the game Star Trek failed to materialise despite overwhelming anticipation.

But what if it were possible to create these graphics at home yourself?



The VidiZX is a video digitiser designed especially for the ZX Spectrum by Rombo Productions. It was originally sold by mail order. In its day, it provided many hours of entertainment as users captured everything from children's cartoons, political debates and the news.

The device was not the only video digitiser on the market. There was the Sunset Video Digitiser, costing £128 and the Dataskip Videoface costing £69. The later offered animation, and this feature is also present in the VidiZX, which could eventually be purchased for just £26.

The manual is detailed and nicely written making it possible to started right away. There is also help for technical users who want to include machine code routines into their own programs.

The interface itself is compatible with every model of the Spectrum from the rubber-keyed 48K up to the Plus 3. It has a phono connector for input and a small dial which we will come onto shortly.

The software is fully menu driven allowing easy control of all functions using only the ENTER key and the SPACE key. Pressing ENTER three times from the start screen for example, will take you into the simple frame grab mode.

Once the video source is running, the video will appear on the television in digitised Spectrum style. The VidiZX display the streaming images by setting each pixel on its 256 x 192 display to either on or off. The default colour scheme is yellow paper with blue ink, that although watchable is a bit odd. You can change this to your preferred settings including bright and flashing.

You can turn on an optional shade affect that adds some dithering to the picture, which improves the quality by adding more light and shade.

The small dial mentioned earlier can be used to adjust the best brightness values in real time based on the video source.

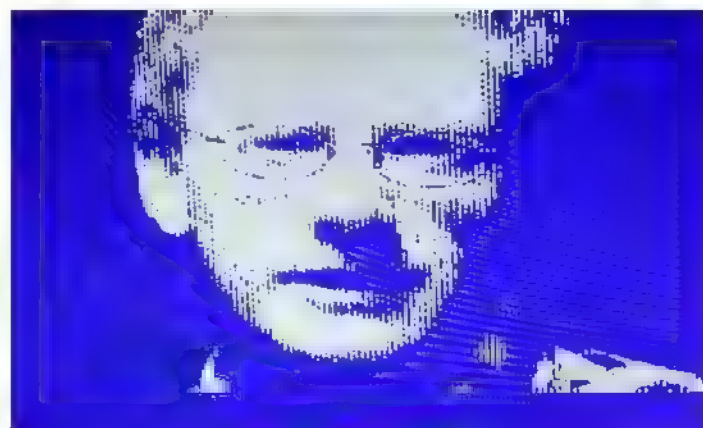
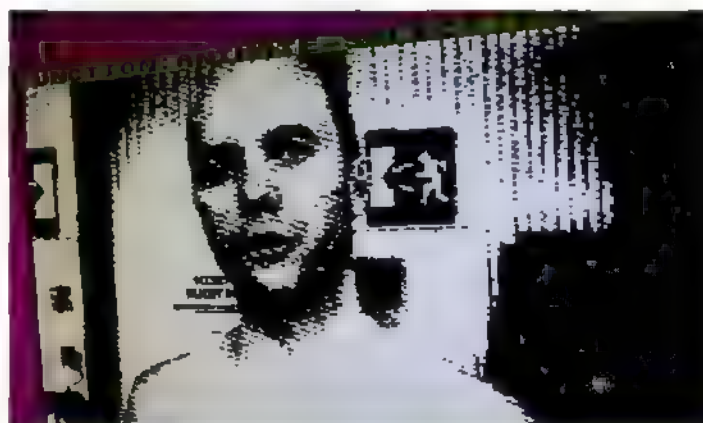
Chosen frames can be grabbed and then saved for use in your own programs, or for import into an art



package. You can save to a variety of devices including tape, Disciple, Microdrive and +3 disk.

The best feature provides more entertainment in the form of animation. Setting the device to Sequence mode, you can capture up to six frames and store them in memory. These can then be played back to produce animation. You can play them forwards or backwards and at varying speeds. Again these sequences can be saved and used in your own programs.

In conclusion, the VidiZX is a fun gadget with lots of flexibility, a well thought out menu system, numerous features and an unbeatable price.



STORMFINCH

STONECHAT PRODUCTIONS 2015

POWERED BY NIRVANA

GREETINGS PILOT. YOU ARE
COMMANDER ARMSTRONG AND YOU MUST
DESTROY THE EVIL EMPIRE OF
MANDARIN. >

Yeah! Stormfinch is a shooter... and there's nothing I like more than a good old tear up on the Spectrum. Not much plot, just solid blasting.

The game obviously has a sense of humour, you can tell from the intro.. And the game continues this with the variety of aliens that (although bred to feel no pain) are just begging to be blasted.

Using the Nirvana engine to give glorious multi-coloured graphics, this horizontal shoot-em-up is firmly in the classic arcade mould.

Using similar firing mechanics as R-Type.. you have three weapons at your disposal.. the usual yet ineffective laser.. the blaster.. which is enabled by holding down the fire key until the power builds up and your outrider..

As each level of aliens arrive, the direction of attack is indicated at the bottom left of the screen and it's up to you to manoeuvre into the best position and set your outrider to in front of, or behind your ship.

The aliens are colourful and have a wide variety of looks, some evil some not so serious, and their attack patterns vary making the game very challenging. The attacks are random too, so you are not quite sure what you are going to get.

Control is crisp, just what you need for this type of game and sound is great, with a nice tune during play and some good effects.

A highly enjoyable game then... certainly give this one a try.



GOBBLEMAN

Artic Computing 1982

When the Spectrum was released, way back in 1982, like so many other systems at the time, the first games to be available were arcade clones. This helped to get the gamers on board, take them away from the dark arcades and into the shops spending money.

Games companies were in their infancy with many being one-man outfits churning out games from their bedrooms. A lot of the games were in BASIC, but the public still bought them because there was nothing better.

One of the very first games bought was Gobbleman from

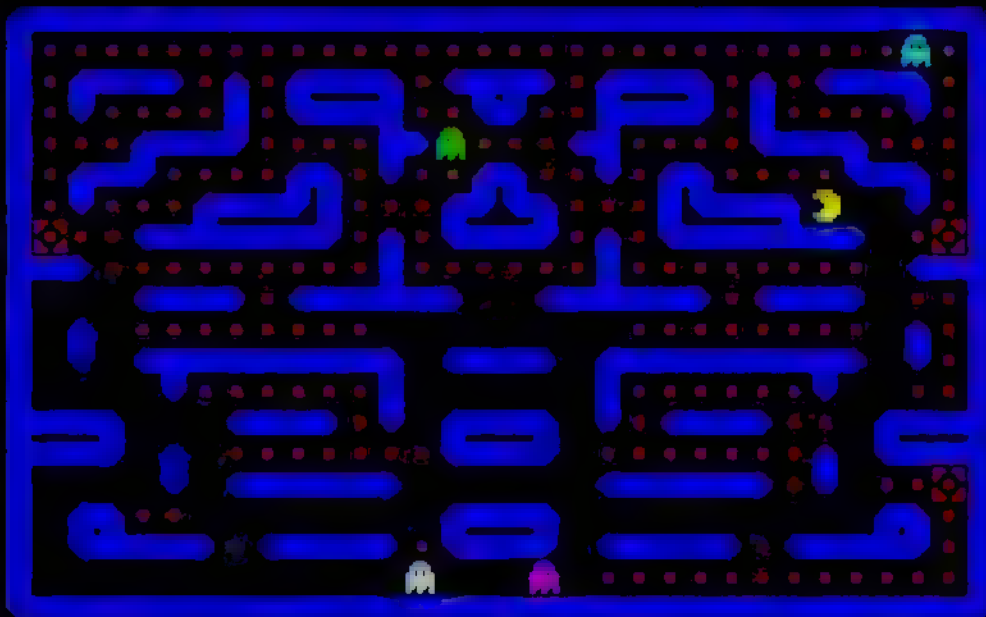
Artic Computing. As you can probably tell from the title and the inlay, this is a Pacman clone. The inlay for all early Artic games was, in my opinion, very good, and this one still looks great.

Onto the game then, and this 8k game tries to replicate the arcade, but because sprites were still not common place on the Sinclair machine, the author opted to use 8 x 8 pixel character blocks and user defined graphics.

Although they look similar to the arcade, because of the size, they don't have the same attraction. Movement too is in eight pixel jumps rather than single pixel smooth transition.

The maze is much larger, taking up the full screen, consisting of the usual blue walls and red dots with power pills at each corner. There are no gates on each side that take the player to the opposite side of the screen though.

The ghosts are less intelligent or individual than the arcade, as you would expect from a 8k game, but do the job well offering decent gameplay.



GOBBLEMAN-©1982-ARTIC COMPUTING
SCORE 000940 LIVES 1

Sound is limited to a blips when a dot is eaten and a death sound, again just blips. The death routine of the arcade, where our little yellow friend rolls back on himself is missing, replaced instead with random ascii characters.

The bonus items are also missing, meaning it's just a dash around the maze.

Control is fine, and gameplay delivers a basic version of them game that can be challenging. There are problems though, and from the very first few plays back in 1982, the game crashed with an OUT OF SCREEN error. During my playing for this review though I couldn't replicate this.

So what we have here then is a run-of-mill arcade clone that has most of the elements, but due to the limitations of the machine and the knowledge of programming at the time, provides a kind of minified version. You do get a decent game out of it if you don't mind the jerky graphics.

MR. WIMPY

© Ocean Software 1986

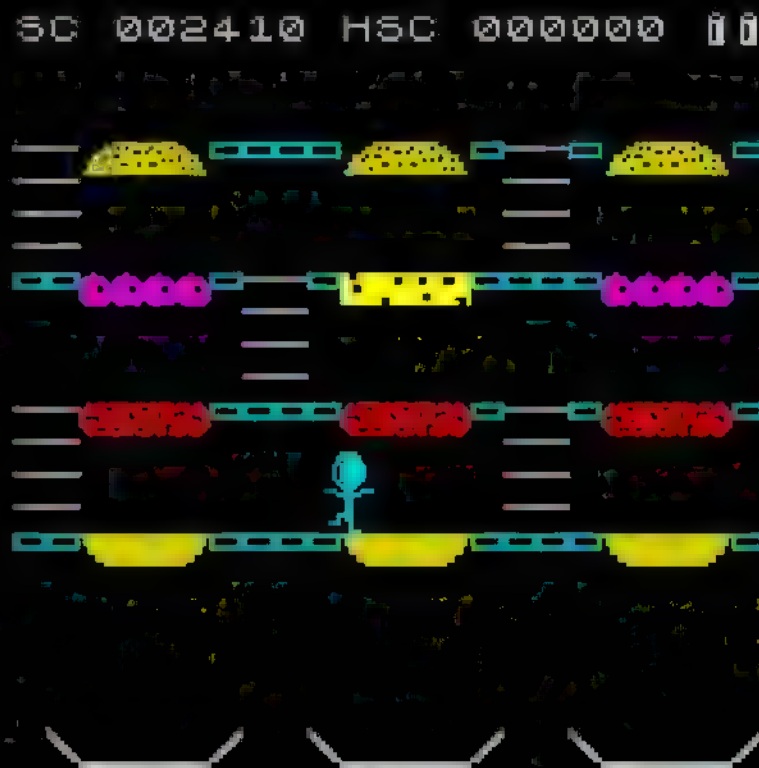
Back in the early days of home computing, arcade clones were in abundance, and it was tricky trying to find out which one was best. Every company seemed to be selling their version as 'the best' with 'arcade quality' graphics and sound.

A few arcade gamers however, were given less attention. Hunchback springs to mind with two versions, another Burger Time. I think there are about three versions of this game on Spectrum, at least from my trawl of the archives...

Mr Wimpy is Ocean's take on the game, getting its name from a chain of burger stores very popular in the 80s. A poor attempt to hide the true game or just a cheap licence, who knows?

If you bought this fully expecting a game of Burger Time, then you would have been instantly disappointed. Yes, the game is in there, but you have to play a kind of mini-game first, and not a very good one.

You control Mr Wimpy who has to pick up a tray from the left side of the screen and carry it across to the right. Avoiding manholes and a bouncing... thing! Once there, he will pick up one of three ingredients and then have to get it back across to the left. When all three have been successfully collected, you get to play the game you have been waiting for.



For anyone not familiar with Burger Time, you have to build burgers. Each layer of burger is set on different levels of the screen, connected with ladders. When you move over a layer, it drops down, knocking down any layers below. Once all the layers form a burger, and all burgers are built you move to the next level.

Chasing the player are various things like an egg, a sausage, a spoon and a pickle. You are armed with three sets of pepper, and using this against one of them will temporarily stop them. Dropping a layer of burger onto them will destroy them for a time, after which they re-spawn.

There is a skill in this, and the clever player can coax them under the layers, killing several at once.

In this game, when a layer drops, all the action halts until its finished, presumably to play the sound effects! This adds a delay in the game, which although gives the player a short rest, can be come annoying.

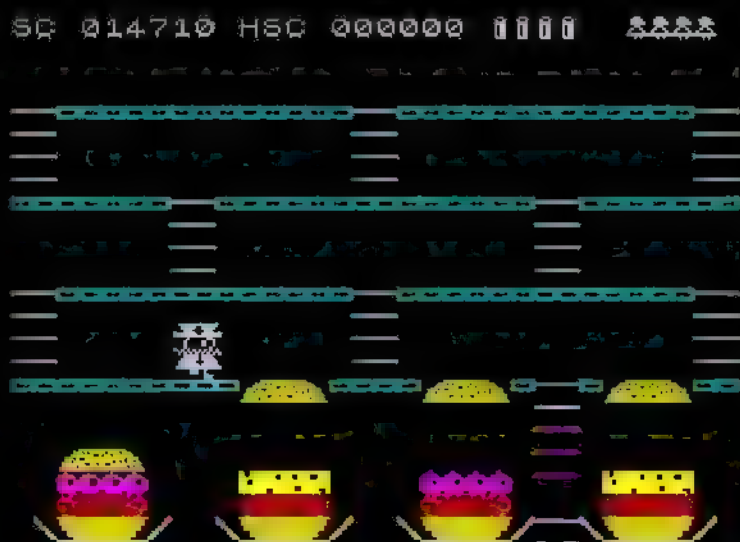
The graphics are flat, and not very details, and the animation of the other characters consist of just two frames. This makes some of them, in particular the sausage, look very odd.



Control is good and responds well, and the sound, apart from the intro tune and death tune, is non-existent. Anyone familiar with the brand Wimpy, will recognise the tune as coming from the television advert, which is a nice touch, but to have no sound during gameplay is a bit of a let down.

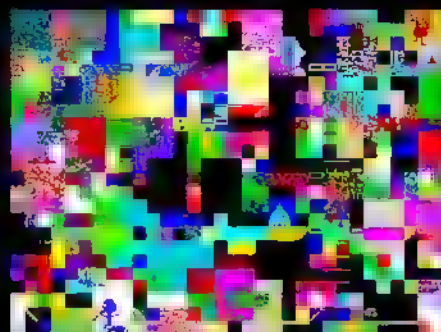
The main issue I have though is that horrible mini-game. The bouncing thing does not ever follow standard physics, and can change direction at any time, usually bumping into you. This little game can take ages and does not serve any purpose I can see.

The main game provides a good version of the arcade equivalent, although the stopping of gameplay to allow the layers to drop is irritating.



BUG ALERT

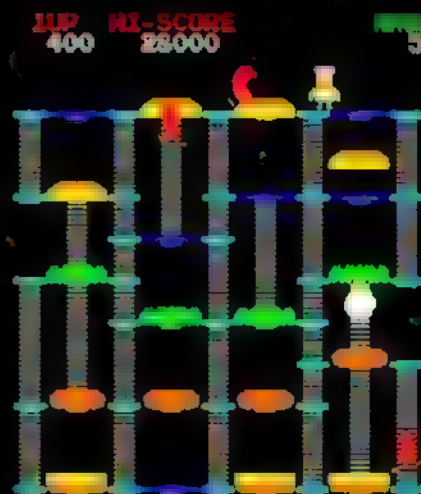
The original version of this game has some serious bugs, most of which are graphic corruption, but once you hit the 7th level, the game completely crashes.



There is a fixed version available to download, so make sure you get this one.

The Arcade Game

BurgerTime is a 1982 arcade game created by Data East initially for its DECO Cassette System. The player is chef Peter Pepper, who must walk over hamburger ingredients located across a maze of platforms while avoiding pursuing characters.



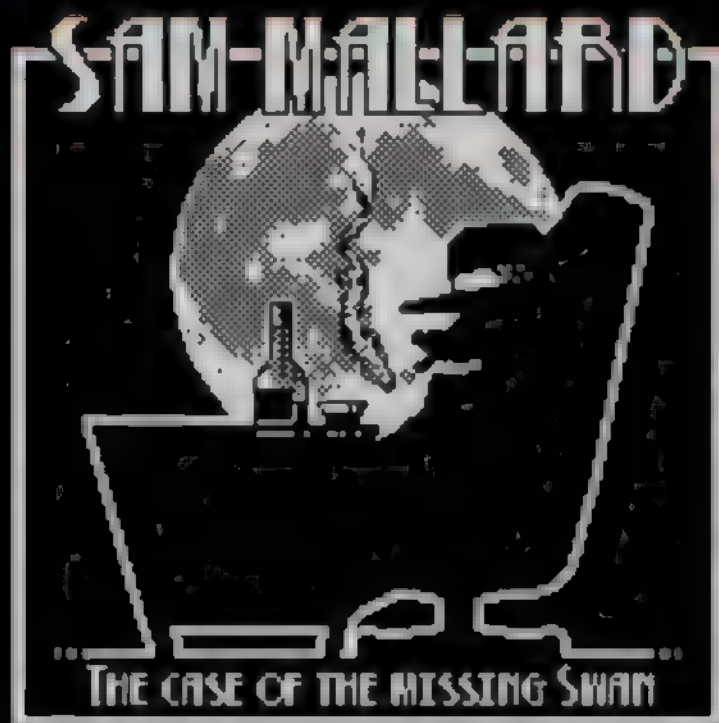
The game's original Japanese title, Hamburger, was changed

to BurgerTime before its introduction to the United States.

In the United States, Data East USA licensed BurgerTime for distribution by Bally Midway as a standard dedicated arcade game. Data East also released its own version of BurgerTime in the US through the DECO Cassette System. The Data East and Midway versions are distinguished by the manufacturer's name on the title screen and by the marquee and cabinet artworks, as the game itself is identical.

(Info from Wikipedia)

GAME REVIEWS

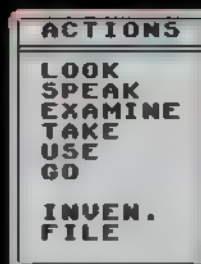


ERSH 2016

There are many new games for Spectrum but most of them are arcade titles often made with "game designers". Sam Mallard - The Case of the Missing Swan is a pleasant exception to this rule because it's an adventure game coded in assembler.

If you know old adventure games you probably remember that many of them had no graphics and commands had to be entered from the keyboard. Sam Mallard doesn't copy this ancient style, it has graphics and commands can be chosen from the menu.

The storyline refers to the classic detective stories. You are Sam Mallard, a private eye, and your task is to find a missing wife of Mr. Swan.

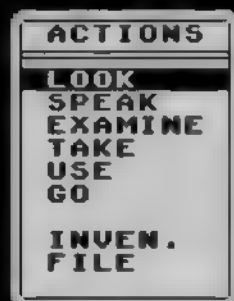


The door was open and I'm standing inside the Swanline office. There are some papers and documents on the desk, a painting of a sailboat hangs on the wall and a chest of

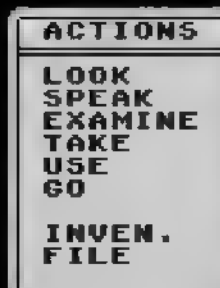
There are over a dozen locations to visit, many objects to find and few characters with whom you can talk. The screen is divided into 3 parts: menu with commands, picture illustrating the location and a text window with location description, dialogues etc.

Choosing a command is very easy, all you have to do is use keys Q or A to highlight the command and Space to confirm (you can also use a Kempston joystick).

The graphics are well drawn. They are black & white and give this game the look of classic detective movies from the 1940's. Sound almost doesn't exist, all you can hear is clicking when choosing a command. It's not a drawback though because sound effects aren't important in adventure games.



I'm back on street in front of the Starling lawyer office.



I'm standing on the Main street of Chinatown. There are lots of small shops around and even though it's past midnight it's full of noise and activity. The

Solving the case of the missing Swan is not difficult because the game is short and the puzzles are easy.

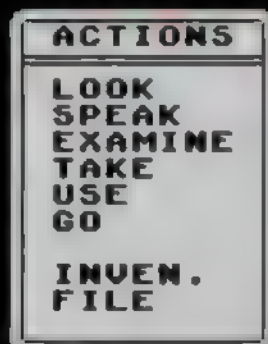
There isn't anything you can do wrong here - you can't die or get stuck - and you will probably complete it in one or two evenings. So, it won't give you long term entertainment but will give you few hours of good fun.

There is an interesting story "behind the scenes". Sam Mallard was originally planned to be released 10 years ago on C64. The work stopped at very early stage, there were just few pictures and no code.

This year Ersh decided to create this game but on the Spectrum. The code, puzzles, story and additional pictures took him about a month, which is pretty amazing and I hope that he will release more adventure games like this.

Sam Mallard - The Case of the Missing Swan requires any Spectrum with 48k of RAM.

Photo "PopoCop" Szymanski



There are some dead butterflies on display here, I never got the hobby of collecting dead insects myself but to each their own. A small plaque beneath reads:



THE SILLY BIT



A competitor to the Spectrum, released by Commodore boasting many excellent features including the ability to work without any type of cables whatsoever.

Surely this must put it above Sinclair's machine as that needs a power lead and aerial lead to even get started.

THE PYRAMID

Fantasy Software 1983

The Pyramid is a simple, yet enjoyable arcade game with a twist. As the name suggest, it is set in a pyramid containing 120 chambers, and you have to progress through the levels from top to bottom.

To make progress, you have to collect gems that only appear after a set amount of aliens have been destroyed. Once collected you drop them over a forcefield protecting one of the two exits at the bottom of the screen. This opens the exit and allows you to move downward.

You can only use the gem when it is cyan. As it slowly drops down the screen you have to protect it from the aliens. If they hit it, it will be destroyed. Also, if you have the gem, and you are hit by an alien, you loose it.

The number of aliens needed to make the gem appear can be seen at the bottom left of the screen.

The main character, Ziggy, floats about in his little capsule and is armed with a laser. He can use this to destroy aliens to both score points and to protect the gem when it appears.

The graphics are large, well drawn and have a distinct comedy look. The game notes it has taken many ideas from the Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy. They move smoothly and there is always a lot happening on screen.

Sound is also well used, with suitable effects for a variety of things like shooting and explosions.

As the game progresses it takes more gems to open the exit, so the game is certainly a challenge and will keep you busy for a while.

Overall this is an enjoyable game and well worth checking out.



ACCELERATOR

Century Software 1984

Every now and again I like to pick out random games that I have never heard of and give them a play, this is one such game.

It's a horizontal shooter, but with a few differences. There are levels that are advanced through by clearing the current wave, and your ship has the ability to fire in both directions, depending on which way you are currently moving.

This means you can either take on the enemy

head on, dodge their bullets and try to hit them, or wait for them to pass by, whip around the back and take them out from behind.

The enemies wrap around the screen with their bullets preceding them, so you have to be careful if you chose the later method. Either way, the game is not easy, and the size of the sprites and enemy fire make it tricky. As you dispatch aliens, the game speeds up too, so again it can be very difficult to get that last enemy.

The graphics are large and move smoothly, but your ship is not easy to control due to the constant movement. Once you move in a set direction, you will continue until you chose another. This makes the game even trickier, especially when the screen starts to fill with enemy mines.

There is a nice starfield too, but there is a lot of attribute problems, especially on the enemy ships.

Sound is good with a variety of effects that really suit the game.

To add more to think about, there is also a fuel limit to consider, and this is used each time you shoot and is replenished for each kill.

Overall, not a bad little shooter that grows on you the more you play it.

SCORE
0000050

HIGH
0015950

LIVES
3

FUEL
40

SCORE
0000400

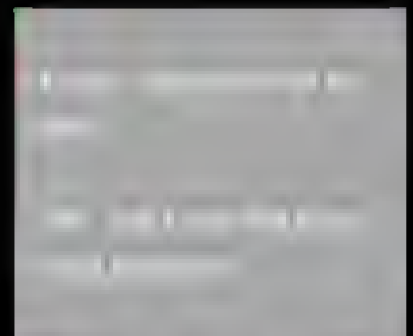
HIGH
0015950

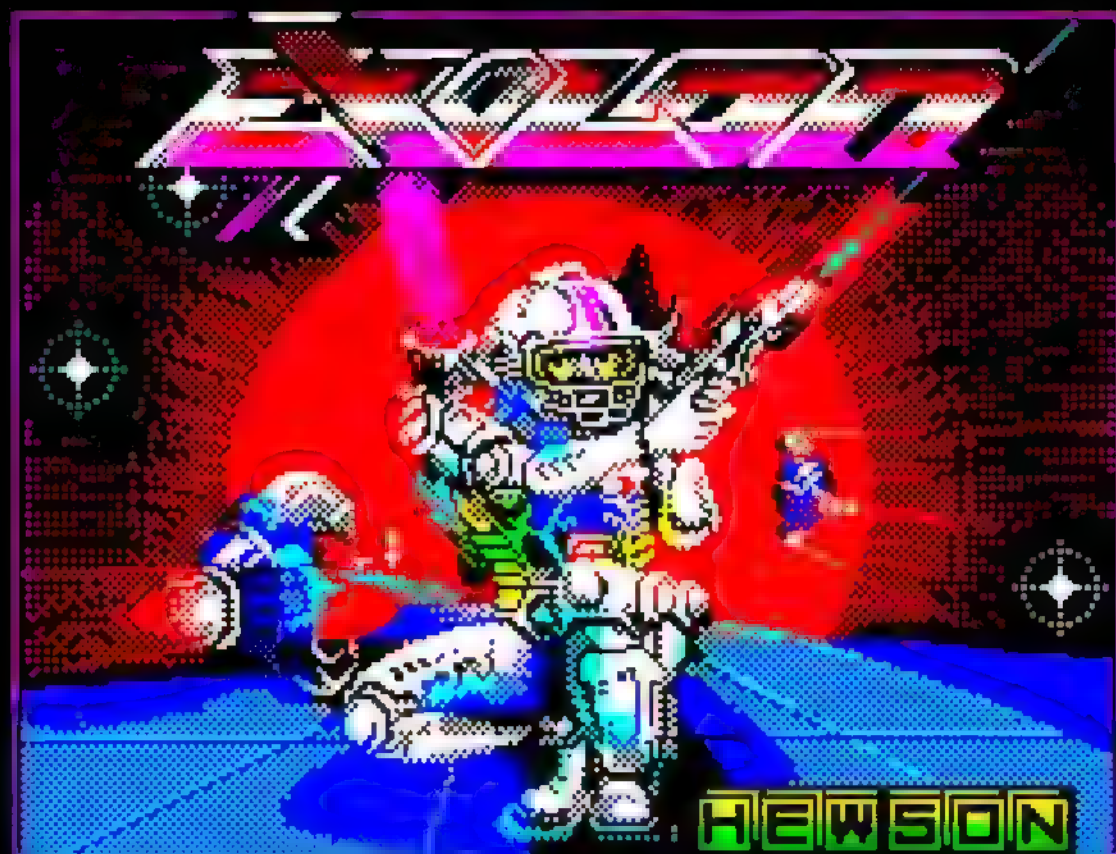
LIVES
2

FUEL
69

LOADING: SCREEN\$

Fans have been busy remaking old loading screens, and the results are fantastic.





REPLAY REPORT

Replay Expo returns to Manchester

This massive event again returned to Manchester on October 8th and 9th 2016. The weekend, hosted at Event City close to the Trafford Centre, was packed, not only with people, but with entertainment in a variety of guises.

The latest games were on show from the big players along with the indie developers, there was several cosplay events and if you had the time, several talks from various people.

What I go there for though, is the retro stuff.

My first port of call is always the arcade section. Lines and lines of classic arcade cabs, all set to free play, is something I can't resist, and spend many hours trying any I can play.

Of course there are hundreds of like-minded fans as well, so you have to hover around for a few minutes and jump in as their games ends.

The sound from all these machines is incredible, and shouting to communicate is the only method that works. Throw in some 80's music and of course the other events taking place, and the whole thing can be deafening. You'll come away with a sore throat like I did!

Pinball Wizard

It's all worth it though, just to be able to play those classic machines. If you ever get bored of those, there is always the pinball section. Again lines and lines of tables all set to free play, and all generating noise.

These are always popular, and getting a game can be hard once the hall fills up.

Retro Consoles

And even if you tired of the pinball, then you could walk a few yards and find yourself surrounded by hundreds of classic consoles.

Nintendo, Atari and Sega were all to be found along with a host of other game-playing devices and home computers. BBCs, Amstrads, Famicoms and if you looked very a closely, a few Spectrums.



REPLAY REPORT

There was a plethora of stalls selling retro and cosplay stuff, and one selling old magazines. I managed to grab myself some nice Personal Computer World issues for a quid each.

Wondering about where a few industry people, Jeff Minter was there, showing off his new titles, and Jim Bagley could also be found.

I met up with Geoff Neil, the guy that helps with the video show, had a good chat and a pint, and as we were walking around, he told me he had met Jim Bagley in Blackpool at another event, and he had promised to show him the Spectrum Next dev kit. We knew Jim was at Manchester, and eventually we found him.

The ZX Uno

Before we saw the dev kit though, we were shown a demo of the ZX Uno, a small hardware re-making of the Spectrum. This isn't like, for example, the Pi, that emulates the Sinclair machine, it is instead a Spectrum made from modern parts.

You can connect normal PC keyboards to it and the video output is much improved. It also has a built-in SD card slot and support for ULA plus, extending the colours to 64. This gives some pretty impressive results.



The Spectrum Next

We then finally got to see the Spectrum Next dev kit.

Jim set it up, plugged it in and told us about progress for the wonderful device.

The dev kit itself was the main PCB (version 1.2) in a clear Perspex case. The impressive outer shell is nearing completion and looks very much part of the Sinclair product line. It should do really, it was designed by Rick Dickinson, the guy who designed the Spectrum cases.



The final specifications are expected to be:

- Z80 processor running up to 7mhz.
- 512kb RAM.
- ULA plus support.
- SD card slot.
- HDMI output.
- AY sound chip.
- Joystick port.
- Hardware sprites
- And more



Once turned on, Jim quickly ran one of his little pet projects, real time streaming of a full Star Wars movie.

The data came from the SD card, and the end result was pretty impressive for a Speccy. This could hold many possibilities for future games.

Another great show, and one I will be going back to next year.



Arcade Cabs (I can remember)

Afterburner, Asteroids, Battlezone, Berzerk, Blasteroids, Daytona, Defenda, Dig Dug, Donkey Kong, Donkey Kong Jr, Frogger, Galaxian, Galaga, Gorf, Gauntlet, Gauntlet Legends, Gyruss, Hunchback, Jango First, Millipede, Missile Command, Moon Patrol, Ms Pacman, Nemesis, Pacman, Pacmania, Phoenix, Pleiades, Power Drift, Rally X, Rolling Thunder, Sega Rally, Salamander, Space Harrier, Space Invaders, Star Wars, Tempest, Time Pilot, Toobin, Iron (broken), Vanguard, Zaxxon.



Reviewing the games that came with the Vega console

..but without instructions!

DEFENDER

If, like me, you were hoping for a defender clone, then, like me, you will be totally disappointed. Instead of the classic arcade shooter, we get a game that scores low in almost everything.

The premise is to defend (this is where the name comes from, and not a ploy to misuse the name.. obviously.. that would be very bad!) a small group of things. Without the instructions it's difficult to tell what they are, even from the poor 8 x 8 pixel graphics. These all line up on the left hand side of the screen, and randomly move up and down.

One column in front of them is your ship, and approaching from the right hand side of the screen are a number of.. what look like missiles. If they hit the things being protected, then the game ends, so you have to shoot them.

Your shot, which is just a pixel line, reaches almost the full length of the screen, so you can destroy these missiles when they are quite a distance away. Because they are a few of them though, they soon get too close for comfort.

The game begins badly, by asking you to input a level of play between 1 and 10. Now, as we all know, the Vega does not have any keys this kind of input unless you use the fiddly built in, on-screen affair. This is a pain, but the problems don't end there. If you lose a game, you are asked to enter 'A' to play again, so it's back to the keyboard.



Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear...

The game itself looks like a type in game, with tiny, badly drawn graphics, character based movement and sometimes unresponsive controls. The sounds is much better, which shows the author has made some attempt at machine code. There are also a few affects thrown in, but these cannot rescue this poor game.

HUMPHREY

This more modern game definitely lends itself to the Vega, with simple, addictive gameplay and all the elements you would find on a typical pick-up-and-play hand held game.

The idea is far from new though, and you have to guide Humphrey around a square based landscape, changing the colour of the blocks as you go. It's a bit like a top-down Q-Bert.

There are other things that are out to get you, and these range from randomly wondering squirrels to chasing parrots and bouncing heads.

You have the power to jump too, but even though you can jump over two enemies at once, you can't jump over the walls, which is a bit odd. The jump mechanism takes some getting used to as well, as the longer you hold the jump key down, the longer Humphrey will stay in the air, up to a set point where he then falls back. Whilst in the air, you can move him to complete the manoeuvre.

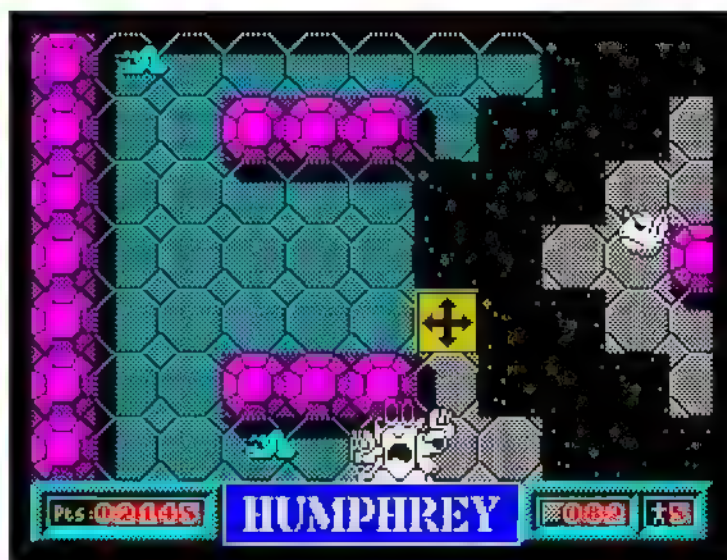
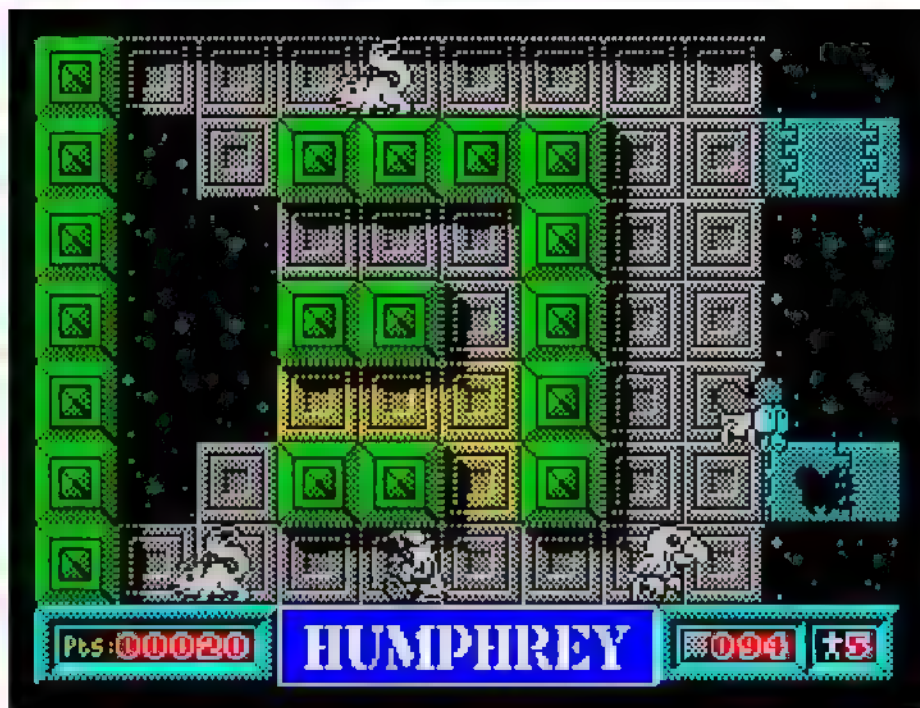
Other elements are also involved such as one-way conveyor belts and hazards that have to be avoided, as well as the platforms themselves that must be adhered to or Humphrey will fall to his death.

In a way this game reminds me of Chips Challenge, which isn't a bad thing, but with the added jump mechanic, there are other gameplay elements thrown in.

In play the game is slightly tricky due to the large sprites and restricted play area. The number of chasing nasties also causes issues, and you often get trapped with no possible way to have avoided it.

As the levels progress, the graphics change and the gameplay gets harder, with mid-air direction changes required to complete levels. There are also floating platforms, switches to turn off electric floors, impassable blocks and masses of enemies.

The graphics are large, excellently drawn and move smoothly. I especially like the Manic Miner telephone on



level 2. When Humphrey jumps, he leaps out of the screen, gurning frantically, which is a nice touch.

Sound is well used, with some nice tunes and spot effects throughout the game.

Because this type of game does not really need any instructions, it works well with the Vega, and is one of the better games I have so far played on the device. Well worth a quick go.

WARNING: MAY CONTAIN SPOILERS

GRUMPY OGRE'S

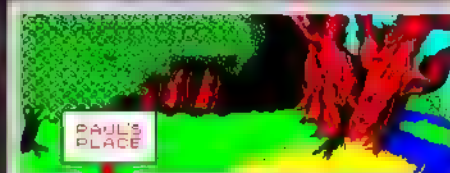
Adventure Page

Adventureland is one of the oldest and best known adventure games across all platforms, second only, probably, to Zork.

Released in 1978, it finally made it to the Spectrum in 1985 and the game's author, Scott Adams is also well known, having created a mass of adventure games in the 80s and 90s.. and beyond.

commands and I got a text description, along with exits and objects. Now this made all the difference and I started to really enjoy this adventure.

The Spectrum version includes some nice, almost instant graphics, and the game begins, as many do, in a forest.

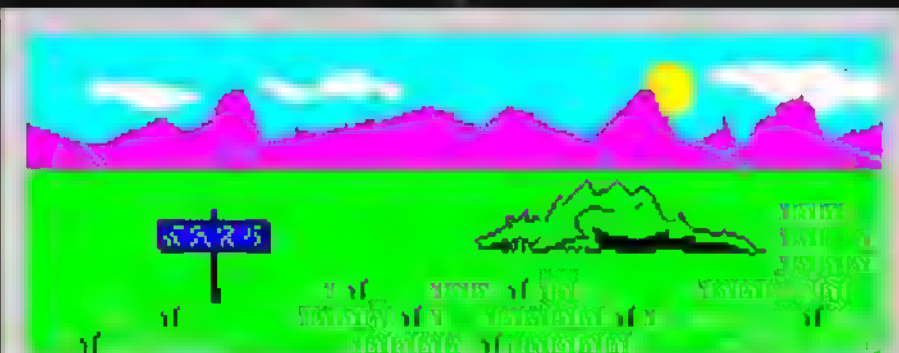


```
OK
BOY that really hit the spot!
---TELL ME WHAT TO DO ? DROP MUD
I'm bitten by chiggers
---TELL ME WHAT TO DO ? H
O.K.
---TELL ME WHAT TO DO ? GET FRUIT
My chigger bites are now INFECTED!
---TELL ME WHAT TO DO ? GET DO
---TELL ME WHAT TO DO ? GET ARE
---TELL ME WHAT TO DO ?
---TELL ME WHAT TO DO ? G
```

the quicksand bog there is a statue that cannot be taken away so using the magic word will transport it.

A tree in the swamp can be climbed and writing on a web tells you it needs cutting down. So, if you got the axe... I think you know what needs doing.

Watch out though, some nasty creatures called Chiggers will bite you and if not dealt with, will eventually kill you.



To see how well you're doing say: "SCORE"

Remember you can always say "HELP"

```
---TELL ME WHAT TO DO ?
---TELL ME WHAT TO DO ? CLIMB TREE
---TELL ME WHAT TO DO ?
---TELL ME WHAT TO DO ?
---TELL ME WHAT TO DO ? CLIMB DOWN
```

O.K.

```
---TELL ME WHAT TO DO ?
---TELL ME WHAT TO DO ? GO EAST
```

O.K.

```
---TELL ME WHAT TO DO ? ■
```

Adventureland was the first in a series of many, and featured graphics on systems that supported them.

At first I didn't get on with this game at all. The location graphics did not indicate any exits, and items in the pictures seemed not to be part of the game.

Then quite by accident, I pressed the enter key without entering any

I like how the graphics depict what is happening in the game, including things you do at certain locations and changes to the scenery after an action.

I soon had an axe with a magic word on it, that when spoken makes anything you are carrying be transported to.. of all places.. a location called Paul's Place.

This is useful early in the game, in



```
Lamp is off
---TELL ME WHAT TO DO ? GO DO
O.K.
---TELL ME WHAT TO DO ? GO HO
---TELL ME WHAT TO DO ?
---TELL ME WHAT TO DO ? GO HA
---TELL ME WHAT TO DO ? LIGHT
Lamp burns with a cold flame!
glow.
---TELL ME WHAT TO DO ? GO DO
O.K.
---TELL ME WHAT TO DO ? GO ■
```

To heal the bites you need the mud from the tree and keep getting it as it soon dries up and falls off. This got a bit tedious after a while, but didn't stop me enjoying the game and trying to work out the puzzles.

Another warning though: do not go near the dragon when holding the mud!

There are so many things that kill you without notice, like the bottomless pit. Luckily the game is not over and you are sent to a location called limbo. I'll leave to work out how get out!

It can be a little annoying that you keep getting sent there though, as it's only one move away from the rest of the locations.

Like many early adventure games, this is a treasure hunt, and to get points you have to deposit anything you find into the tree stump.

There are many similarities between this game and the original Adventure, things like the bear. Sadly you need to get rid of it, and good old yell will send it plummeting to its death, or not! It turns up alive and well later.

I am in a throne room. Visible items:
GOLD CROWN

Some obvious exits are: WEST

---TELL ME WHAT TO DO ?
---TELL ME WHAT TO DO ?
---TELL ME WHAT TO DO ? GET MIRROR
Bear won't let me
---TELL ME WHAT TO DO ? HELP
A voice BOOMS out.
Try --> "LOOK, JUMP, SWIM, CLIMB, FIND, TAKE, SCORE, DROP" and any other verbs you can think of.
---TELL ME WHAT TO DO ? YELL BEAR
Bear is so startled that he FELL off the ledge!
---TELL ME WHAT TO DO ? GET MIRROR
OK
---TELL ME WHAT TO DO ? GO THRONE ROOM
---TELL ME WHAT TO DO ?

And... gggrrrrrrrr... there is a sodding maze in there too... I hate mazes, they just serve to annoy players, and boy do they do that!

Unfortunately, most mazes have something in them of use, a vending machine, and pirate chest in the original and various turn-a-screws in Adventureland.

More annoyances with lamps that run out of energy! Just another thing to keep an eye on along with those bloody bees!

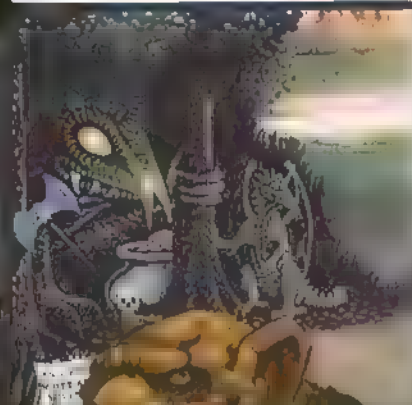
If you've played the game you will know what I mean. At least it's not just you they scare... Hint hint.

I enjoyed playing this game (makes a change!) but that Limbo place got very annoying, as do the bees later on. Most of the puzzles are logical and it's not a long and drawn out affair. For adventurers seasoned in the art of gaming, it shouldn't take long to complete with a score of 100.

Because you can't die too, makes

Adventure INTERNATIONAL 1

ADVENTURELAND



this more approachable, giving you chance after chance. But then again there are multiple ways in which you can die.

Chiggers, dragons, pits, bears, bees... but not boredom!

Give it a try folks.. And be sure to join me next time for another round of wandering about in the dark.



DOWN
OLE
ALLWAY
LAMP
less blue
OWN



Is it a bird?
Is it a plane?

No, it's a programmers toolkit!

For BASIC programmers, Sinclair's built in debugging tools were a bit sparse. You did get syntax reporting and error messages, but very little in the way of proper debugging.

If you wanted that then you had to look to a commercial option such as Super Toolkit from Nectarine software.

Release in 1983, the package came with the tape, on which were versions for both 16 and 48k machines, an empty tape and a small manual. Mine had been written on by the previous owner, but you expect this from second hand goods, especially one aimed at the more technical user.

On the tape there was also detailed information about how to use the program that basically covered what was in the manual.

This package contained 11 utilities to help you debug your own programs these were;

Renumber, List variables, Trace, Keyword Replace, Block delete, Memory map, Header reader, Crunch, Memory used, Program length and Free memory.

The code itself occupied about 2.5 kb and could sit in the background as you typed away at your BASIC listing.

This is not for machine code programmers, so very much aimed at the users branching out into more complex coding techniques that would need such tools.

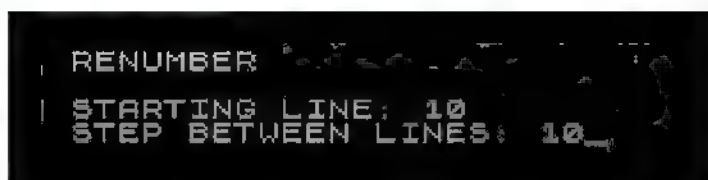
To enable the toolkit you called the code using Randomise USR 62839 (at least according to the manual). The version I have uses a different address.

To demonstrate some of the tools I quickly knocked up a little BASIC program that allowed you to control a letter A moving around the screen.

When ready... you break into the code and enter REM. This activates the toolkit.

Now you can access the functions by pressing the enter key and a key representing the specific tool simultaneously. For example to use the renumber function you press enter and R.

Renumber



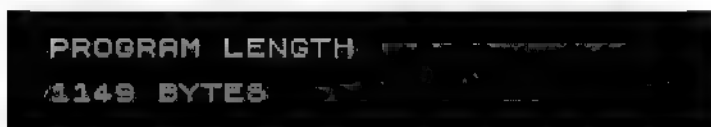
This function allows you to renumber your entire BASIC program in one simple step. You are asked which line to start from and the space between each line. This is a useful option, as it means you don't have to have consecutive line numbers if you prefer. If you set this to 10 for example, and the start line as 10, your listing would end up being 10, 20, 30 etc...

This function takes into account things like GOTO and GOSUB but does not handle calculated versions of those commands.

Variables

To list the variables we press Enter and L. You can now loop through all the variables setup in your program and their values.

Program Length / Memory



To see how long the program is you use Enter and P. This displays what it says!

To see available memory you use Enter and F

Crunch

The Crunch option will strip out all REM statements, unrequired colour codes and spaces, and generally tidy things up. It's not an actual cruncher as we know it today, but it may be useful if you are running low on space and need to clear away some junk.

Block Delete / Keyword Replace

Block Delete and Keyword Replace does what it says really and allows you to delete a block of lines in a single step. Replacing keywords may be little use though.

Trace

The Trace allows you to step through your code, command by command and will help you locate any errors by displaying where the program is at any given point. This is a really valuable tool if you are having difficulty tracking down that evasive bug.



The numbers displayed at the bottom right indicate the line number and statement of the line being executed.

Pressing Enter moves to the next statement or line.

Memory Map

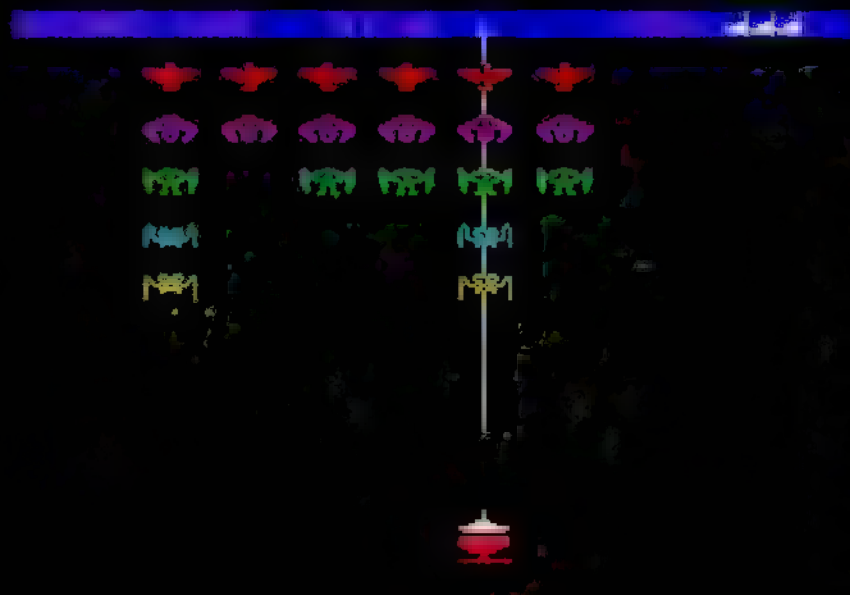
Memory map is probably the more technical tool here and displays lots of fine data that would be useful to more advanced programmers out there.

Overall then this was a useful set of tools for any serious programmer. I say *was...* because in 1983 things like this were quite rare... today of course with emulation this type of utility is all but redundant. But back in 1983 it was a nice thing to have.



ALIEN DESTROYER

Kuma Computers 1984



Anyone who knows me will tell you I love shoot-em-ups, so loading this game up gave me a chance to blast some aliens and have some fun. At least that was the idea.

The game begins with a terrible menu system in yellow, with just three options. Two to let you chose the control method and the third to begin the game, only it doesn't.

Selecting the third option takes you to a pre-game screen with various aliens and the controls outlined. From here you then have to press fire again to actually get into the game.

Once in, we get a fairly standard Galaxian clone, which was a bit of a let-down, as the arcade game is one of my favourites.

The formation moves across the screen with some horrendous flickering that nearly made me reboot the Spectrum. The aliens are of different types and colours, but do not move smoothly, and this adds to the poor score.

The background slowly fills up with stars, rather than starting off as a nice starfield and your ship looks like a cross between a jar and an acorn.

Firing just produces a pixel line from your ship to the top of the screen and there is no explosion of aliens when you hit them, they just vanish.

Sound is??????

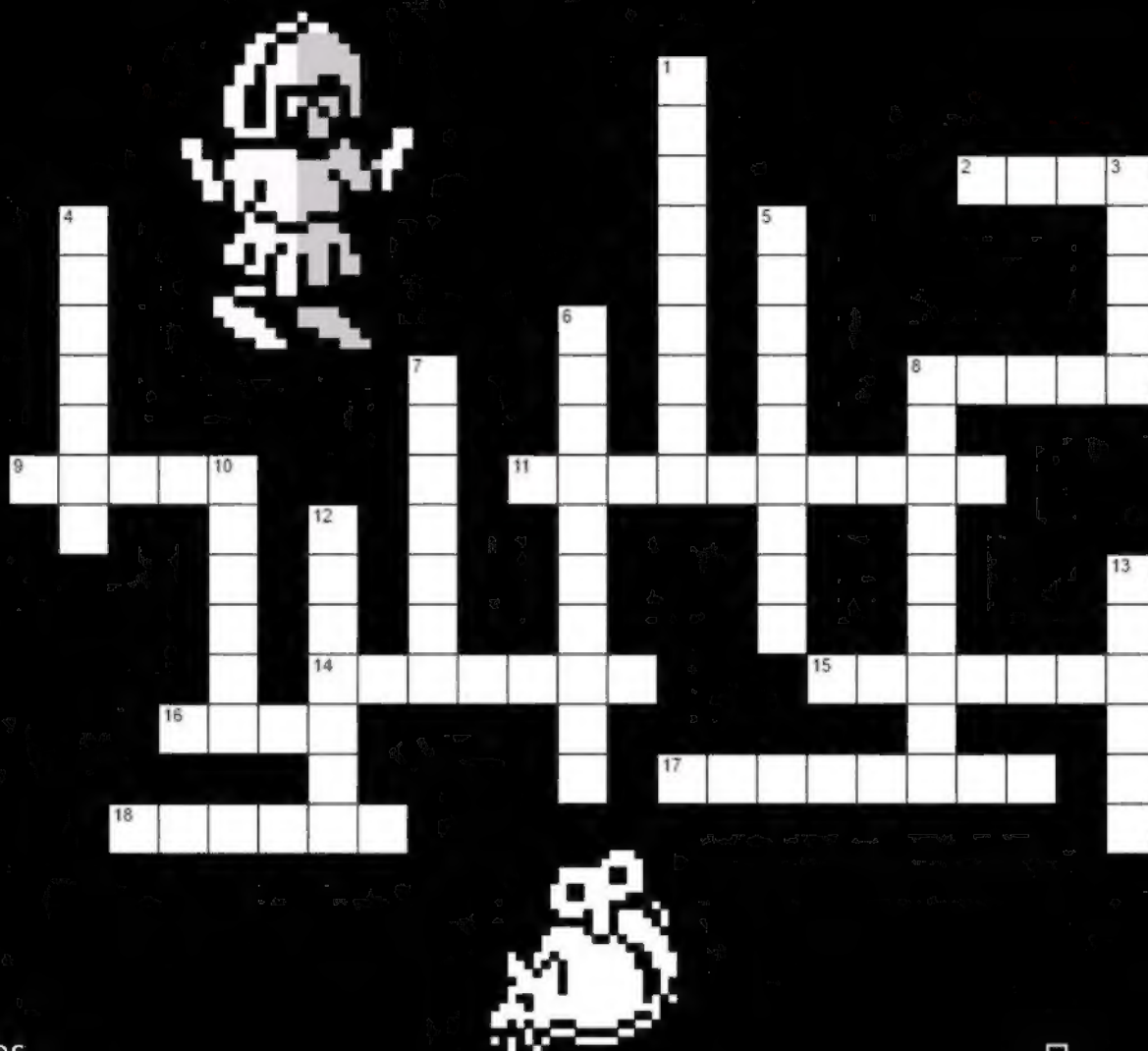
Control is a bit sticky too, and because I am a fan of the arcade game there are many other little problems I picked out. Only one swooping alien, no scrolling stars, no medals, the formation doesn't adjust to having the end lines destroyed... just a few to mention.

Gameplay is average if you can get over the missing arcade elements and judge the game on what it is. It can be challenging, especially toward the end when the aliens start swooping, and ignoring the flickering graphics, it could give you a few minutes blasting.

CROSSWORD

H Test your knowledge of the Sinclair world

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The Clues

Across

2. Pyramid escape artist
8. Harold the hedgehog
9. Magazine accident
11. Melbourne House scrambles around
14. Speedy peripheral provider
15. Codies compilations
16. Handy machine
17. War game crashes
18. Kempston alternative

Down

1. Poking made easy
3. Athlete gets games
4. Words are a speciality
5. Thin sounding storage system
6. Artic compiles games
7. Nasty insect software
8. 100 lines Eric
10. Psion's blue hero
12. Fifty reasons to laugh
13. Horsey lightpen





BACK TO BASICS

Early 1980s
Games Get A Makeover

Four of my very early Spectrum adventure games are in the process of being recreated ready for a new release.

For decades, sat in my dusty loft, was a large red A4 folder containing a lot of graph paper with squares, lines and bad hand writing scrawled upon them. This is not some ancient tome, but my big red book of adventures.

It contained maps for commercial game like *The Hobbit* and Absersoft's *Adventure One*, and was the place I used to collate this kind of material. It was also used to hold the maps for my own, very poor BASIC adventures.

The tapes that held the games are still in my possession and have all been digitally transferred to emulator files so I can cringe yet again at how bad my attempts really were.

One of the games, *Spirit Of Death* was mentioned in the very first issue (issue 0) of this magazine, but there were many others. Some can be seen in the anniversary special of the show if you are really interested.



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Palms Series
Written by Paul Jenkinson © 2016
Version 1.0

The kitchen department sprawls out before
you, littered with half built units and
workbenches, none of which are of an use
to you. A door leads North and some iron
stairs lead down. To the South the
department merges into another room.

> i

You are holding....
Nothing at all.

> _ _ _ _ _
```


TWO NEW RELEASES

CRONOSOFT



DEEP CORE RAIDER+

By Paul Jenkinson

Updated for this release

The universe is huge, the planets and moons numerous and the minerals hidden therein possibly unlimited.

Do you have what it takes to be a Deep Core Raider?



TOOFY IN FAN LAND+

By Paul Jenkinson

Updated for this release

Guide Toofy around the crazy Fan Land in search of his missing nuts.

Horizontal and vertically challenging platform game that will tease your brain.

Available from <http://cronosoft.orgfree.com>